



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

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**MIDLAND WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FRAUD
AND AGGRAVATED IDENTITY THEFT IN FEDERAL COURT**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that Maria Sanchez Aguirre, 41, of Midland, pled guilty late yesterday to access device (credit card) fraud and aggravated identity theft. She is to be sentenced in approximately three months, and faces up to 10 years imprisonment on the fraud charge, and a consecutive, mandatory sentence of two years imprisonment for the ID theft charge.

By pleading guilty, Aguirre admitted to defrauding her employer, Prime Operating Company and Eastern Oil Well Service, of several hundred thousand dollars beginning in 2002 and ending when she resigned under suspicion in September, 2007. Aguirre, employed with the company since approximately 1989, embezzled money and misappropriated goods from her employer through various fraudulent schemes.

According to the documents, more than \$350,000 was taken by Aguirre from a company bank account that was supposed to be used as a petty cash account. Aguirre would fund the account with incoming revenue checks that were supposed to be forwarded to the company headquarters, and then she would withdraw the money or make purchases on the account without her employers' knowledge. This occurred for several years.

Additionally, Aguirre used company credit accounts to make unauthorized purchases for herself, and used a credit card issued to another employee for her unauthorized personal use as well. Aguirre purchased airline tickets, electronics, furniture, groceries, cosmetic surgery, and numerous other items through the fraudulent schemes.

Aguirre was able to hide the fraud from her employer by controlling and opening the incoming mail to the Midland office, which prevented others from noticing irregularities and discrepancies in the bank statements, credit card statements, and missing checks that were mailed to the office. Her actions were discovered during her two week vacation in August and September of 2007, when other employees opened the mail and discovered the fraud.

The case was investigated by the Midland Police Department, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jeff Parras.

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